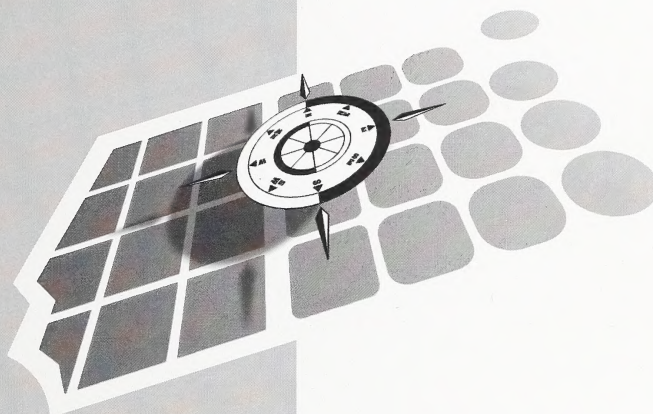


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1996-97
ANNUAL
REPORT



THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



ALBERTA
HEALTH

Office of the Minister

July 22, 1997

The Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Sir:

I have the honour to present the seventh Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report covers activities undertaken by the Council during the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997. It is submitted in accordance with the provisions of s.7(1) of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act for your presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Halvar C. Jonson".

Halvar C. Jonson
Minister of Health

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

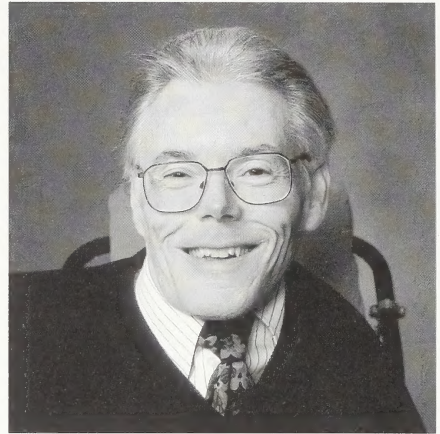
This Annual Report outlines the work of the Premier's Council for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997. As you will read, it was a year in which a number of factors convinced us to continue dividing our resources into two primary areas: advising government in various areas of policy affecting Albertans with disabilities; and a continuing analysis of, and promotion of discussion about, the changing fabric of our society within the context of social policy.

The former area, addressed elsewhere in this Annual Report, has long formed the brunt of our work for obvious reasons. I will attempt to review the latter area and provide our reasons for delving into it.

This year, significant change continued in Alberta. Traditional approaches to delivering social programs continued to give way to decentralized decision-making; government grew more comfortable in its role of setting standards rather than delivering services. Gradually, the implications of doing this became somewhat clearer. Unfortunately, what we and others began to witness wasn't always encouraging.

Different communities, different leaders, different priorities: all have the potential to lead to different outcomes. In areas important to Albertans with disabilities, such as home care and accessible transportation, some regions clearly had experienced lowered levels of service. In particular, Albertans with chronic, long-term disabling conditions appeared to be suffering the brunt of service reductions in some regions.

All this took place as our sunset clause, due to be invoked in 1998, loomed closer. With no definitive announcement from government concerning our future and whether we will continue after the sunset clause, we found ourselves in limbo and feeling a sense of urgency.



What we opted for was an all out attempt, given our limited resources, to identify the root of the problem, suggest solutions and, if they weren't the correct ones, generate enough interest in other sectors of the province to at least get people thinking and discussing the issue.

What is the issue? It's complex, but I believe can be boiled down to this: as our province moves toward economic health and prosperity, we have a golden opportunity to design an all-inclusive social policy framework. This framework could address the needs of and promote well-being for all Albertans, including those with disabilities and others who fall into the category of being vulnerable.

Our vision of the next millennium for Alberta is clear in many respects. We have plans in place that appear to be working; plans that deal with areas such as economics, business growth and tourism. There is no plan in place with respect to social policy. And, as any architect will tell you, it's far more efficient and cost-effective to design from the ground floor up than it is to retrofit along the way.

As we continued work in this arena, we became increasingly convinced that it wasn't enough to deal with the issues in the context of disability alone. Disability is only one piece

in the social policy puzzle. Thus, we have always maintained that we needed to engage in the larger discussion: Where does social policy fit into the overall vision for our province?

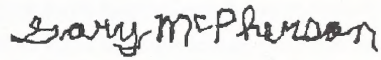
Make no mistake—our ultimate goal was and remains ensuring that Albertans with disabilities are not forgotten in our new era.

The result of our work is three new discussion papers that follow up on work completed in the previous fiscal year. These discussion papers, the details of which are outlined in the section entitled *Year in Review*, represent the work of some of our province's most sharply-honed political minds.

It is work I am deeply proud of, and I am convinced that it can—if we let it—form the basis for a far-reaching plan that will ensure

all Albertans can reap the rewards the next century will bring.

It may behoove us all to remember one of the primary reasons communities abdicated their responsibilities in the social policy arena some three decades ago. They simply lacked the resources and collective vision necessary to ensure that our most vulnerable were provided with the means and opportunity to realize their full potential. Today, as we return a large measure of power to our communities, we must ensure they are provided with the tools and plan in place to wield that power for the good of all.



Gary McPherson
Chairperson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The work of the Premier's Council during 1996-97 followed two paths. Some people tell us that the paths are too divergent; others see that the paths run on a narrow angle of convergence. I am referring to the "disability policy" and "social policy" efforts that are described as part of the *Year In Review* section of this report.

Specifically, the Council has continued to address outstanding issues such as special needs education and employment barriers, but we have also expanded on the work begun to look at the new context of social and economic policy in Alberta.

Three discussion papers were released during the fiscal year that attempt to move from analysis of what has been to a vision of what could be, and possibly should be, in post-deficit Alberta.

An invitational forum was held in Edmonton in October 1996 for leaders in



government, business and the non-profit community sectors to further understanding among these groups of the challenges each faces. More forums may be held next year as opportunities present themselves.

All of this effort has yet to result in any measurable changes, which is problematic for both our critics and our supporters.

However, in the striving for "outcomes," it pays to remember that radical shifts in thinking are both hard to achieve and to measure, yet they are necessary for true change. Without broad-based changes in thinking about social policy, there will be no foundation on which to argue for inclusion of vulnerable members of our society, including people with disabilities.

On the disability-focused side of our work, we have been successful in regenerating interest in entrepreneurship for people with disabilities. A review of the Capability Plus Program, offered by Economic Development and Tourism from 1991-95, showed that people with a wide range of disabilities could be successful in a wide range of businesses. Despite the fact that the Alberta Government is out of the business of providing business loans, a dedicated group of individuals has formed an intergovernmental committee to link with business service and loan providers to facilitate access for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Accessible transportation concerns are increasing as this growth industry falls further behind in funding. The *Transportation Demand Study* conducted with Alberta Transportation, Alberta Health, and Alberta Family and Social Services provided initial evidence that demand is outstripping supply in both urban and rural areas. Further work will be done in this area.

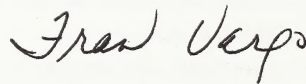
Aboriginal people with disabilities continue to report inadequacy and unavailability of basic support services, as evidenced in the

Removing Barriers Report Card. On the positive side, awareness of issues and existing programs/services is rising. Aboriginal people with disabilities are forming advocacy groups within their own communities and speaking up about their needs. Information is power, and the Council continues to facilitate the acquisition of information through projects like the *Handbook for Aboriginal Parents of Students with Disabilities*.

Finally, we asked for an independent evaluation of the Council's performance since inception. This evaluation was completed with favourable results and has been turned over, along with a proposal for the future, to our Minister Responsible, The Honourable Halvar Jonson. At this time, no decision has been made about extending the Council's mandate beyond the 1998 sunset date but an announcement is expected in the months following the election.

It has been my pleasure to serve our stakeholders in various capacities with the Premier's Council since 1988, but this will be my last report. If the Council's mandate is extended, I strongly believe the work should be planned and delivered by "new blood," so I am stepping down effective May 30, 1997.

Good luck and best wishes to those who follow in this challenging arena.



Fran Vargo
Executive Director

The following is a summary of the major projects completed in 1996/97.

Removing Barriers Report Card

In 1993, the Premier's Council completed the report *Removing Barriers: An Action Plan for Aboriginal People with Disabilities*. It outlined 102 recommendations targeted at federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments, with the goal of improving opportunities and services for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

This year, the Premier's Council carried out a review of the implementation progress of the recommendations. The *Removing Barriers Report Card*, completed in October, 1996, reported that overall achievement levels are less than satisfactory: 43% by the provincial government, 23% by the federal government, and 40% by Aboriginal groups. Major barriers preventing more satisfactory implementation levels included jurisdictional issues, devolution of funding/decision-making, poor understanding of the needs of Aboriginals with disabilities, and a lack of advocacy skills at the consumer level.

The report also concluded that new strategies must be developed to further the disability agenda for Aboriginal people.

Handbook for Aboriginal Parents of Children with Disabilities

In conjunction with Alberta Education, the Premier's Council contracted with the Siksika Board of Education to produce a written document for parents of students with disabilities. The handbook responds to the need for information about programs and funding for children with special educational needs who come from Aboriginal backgrounds. It describes the roles and responsibilities of Alberta Education, school staff and families, and provides helpful information for parents about meeting and talking with school staff.

Careful attention was paid to the cultural and linguistic aspects of the document. A video will be produced by Alberta Education in 1997 to provide an alternative format.

Capability Plus Evaluation

The Premier's Council joined forces with Alberta Economic Development and Tourism and Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development to form a steering committee with the goal of evaluating the defunct Capability Plus Program. The program was recommended by the Premier's Council and operated by Alberta Economic Development and Tourism. From 1991 to 1995, it provided 54 loans to 53 people with disabilities for the purposes of starting or improving a small business.

The steering committee contracted a consultant who completed a review of the 54 loan files and conducted interviews with some of the program's participants. The consultant reported that 17 participants remain in business, 19 have closed their business, 14 have an unknown status, and four have moved on to paid employment.

Among the consultant's conclusions were that the program proved that people with a wide range of disabilities can effectively operate a wide range of businesses given access to capital, training, counselling and peer support. The consultant also provided a number of recommendations for improving any follow-up initiative to the program.

Premier's Council Performance Review

The Premier's Council legislation contains a sunset date for the Council's existence of July 1, 1998. In order to prepare for that date, and to determine any ongoing need for a provincial advisory body on disability issues, the Council asked for an independent evaluation of its effectiveness. The evaluation was carried out by conducting interviews

with key stakeholders, including Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, government department managers, Council Members, and members of disability community. It was completed in March, 1997.

The consulting firm contracted to perform the review determined that the Premier's Council has been most successful in raising awareness of disability issues throughout the ranks of government and society in general, and that the Council had carried out its mandate with effectiveness and efficiency. The overall opinion of those interviewed was that the Council had achieved many of its goals, and that it should continue beyond its sunset date, given the dynamic state of policy and services affecting Albertans with disabilities.

Transportation Demand Study

Increasing concern over accessible transportation systems led the Premier's Council to collaborate with Alberta Health, Alberta Transportation and Utilities, and Alberta Family and Social Services to carry out a study of accessible transportation in the province. The study was carried out in a rural community, a small urban community, and a large urban community. The goal was to determine if new government policy and restructuring were contributing to the overburdening of these communities'—and other's—accessible transportation systems.

The findings point to a dramatic increase in demand for accessible transportation in all study sites. Local service providers reported being unable to meet demand, due in part to increased trips resulting from discharging people early from hospital and providing inter-hospital transfers. The study also suggests that people with disabilities are living in smaller settings rather than larger group homes and, combined with more choices for day programs, this often translates into more trips (i.e., three different residents of a home setting travelling in three different

directions at different times of the day, rather than one large group all travelling to one location at one time.

The implications of the findings for people who rely on accessible transportation are increased social isolation, inability to travel to get to preventative health appointments, no spontaneous travel, and no purely social or recreational trips.

The Premier's Council acknowledges the willingness of the participating departments to find solutions to ease the problems.

Status Report

In its ongoing efforts to communicate with stakeholders and disseminate information about its work and issues affecting Albertans with disabilities, the Premier's Council continued to publish the *Status Report*, a quarterly 12-page newsletter. This fiscal year marked the ninth year that *Status Report* has been published.

Social Policy Discussion Papers

The Premier's Council continued analysis of the changing roles and expectations of government, communities and individuals in our province. The goal is to understand the forces reshaping Alberta as we near the next millennium, in order to provide a vision for our province that is inclusive of people with disabilities and others who may be vulnerable.

In pursuit of this vision, the Council released three discussion papers, which follow in a series initiated in 1995 with the release of *A New Context: New Threats, New Opportunities* (February, 1995) and *A New Context, A New Vision* (January, 1996).

What Will It Mean to Be an Albertan in the 21st Century? (July, 1996) actually contains two related papers within a single document. The first, *A New Century, A New Vision*, responds to requests for further interpretation of the implications of government restructuring and the need for a

social vision to complement the economic focus for our province. The second paper, *Redefining Citizenship, Restructuring Community*, returns to the theme of threats and opportunities, and reexamines the imperative for inclusion in Alberta's communities and the challenges related to achieving that inclusion.

Citizenship, Opportunity, Fairness: Alberta in the New Millennium (September, 1996) focuses on key issues facing our province beyond elimination of deficit. These issues are identified as the need of Albertans for hope and vision, and the challenge of a social development strategy to complement Alberta's rising economic and wealth status.

From the Welfare State to the State of Well-Being: Towards a Social Vision for Alberta (March, 1997) continues with the theme of developing an inclusive social policy that meets the needs of all Albertans. This paper was developed in the context of the recently emerging problems of people "falling through the cracks" of service delivery systems.

Reception to these discussion papers from government and community leaders alike remains consistent: the assertions contained in their pages have largely gone unchallenged, and the Premier's Council, through both formal and informal channels, has been encouraged to continue throughout development.

Forum: What Will It Mean to Be an Albertan in the 21st Century?

As a method of stimulating discussion of the themes outlined in the above-mentioned discussion papers, the Premier's Council hosted a one-day forum, bringing together government, business and community leaders. On October 26, 1997, some 60 individuals met at Edmonton's Hilton Hotel.

The day provided an opportunity to discuss post-deficit Alberta and the opportunities and challenges it will represent. Participants

seemed to achieve a shared understanding of Alberta's unique opportunity to create a framework for social programming in decades to come. They also seemed to agree that one of the real challenges for Albertans now is to decide how to spend government money wisely, rather than be concerned about what we have to give up to balance the budget—in other words, planning instead of reacting.

As a follow-up to the forum, the Council prepared a report of the forum, which summarizes the day's proceedings.

Committee Representation

Throughout the year, the Premier's Council continued to provide advice as members of various stakeholder committees. These committees included:

- U of A Faculty of Nursing Advisory Committee (Chair)
- Planning Committee, Alberta Consortium for Rehabilitative and Assistive Technologies Conference
- Barrier Free Transportation Advisory Committee
- Accessible Taxi Service Subcommittee
- CSA Standards Review Committee
- Barrier Free Design Committee
- Wildrose Foundation Japanese Disability Exchange
- Services to Persons with Disabilities Management Committee
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- Continuing Care Outcome Measures Steering Committee
- Capability Plus Steering Committee
- Alberta Teachers Association Blue Ribbon Panel on Special Education

In addition to participating as members of committees that meet on a regular basis for a specific purpose, Council staff attended various departmental consultation meetings, and met with Ministers and senior department officials on emerging and ongoing matters related to disability.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Premier's Council is composed of up to fifteen members, who are appointed for three year terms. Members meet quarterly to discuss current issues, establish priorities and guide the daily work of Council's secretariat. Members are appointed on the basis of level of community participation, disability-related knowledge, and geographic location in Alberta.

As of March 31, 1997, the members of the Premier's Council were:

- Ms. Anne Belohorec (Sherwood Park)*
- Mrs. Joan Charbonneau (Alberta Beach)

- Mrs. Shirley Dupmeier (Medicine Hat)
- Ms. Judy Eshenko (Banff)**
- Mr. Doug Giles (Cold Lake)
- Ms. Cindy Gordon (Edmonton)**
- Ms. Dayla Maisey (Okotoks)*
- Mr. Gary McPherson, Chair (Edmonton)
- Mr. Neil Marshall (Calgary)
- Mr. Michael Ross (Calgary)*
- Mr. Phillip Stephan (Red Deer)
- Ms. Toni Tallman (Calgary)*

*Appointed 06/12/96 **Reappointed 02/12/97

1996-97 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Object of Expenditure	Authorized	Expended	Unexpended (Overexpended)
Manpower			
Salaries — Permanent Positions	75,800	89,592	(13,792)
Salaries — Non-permanent Positions	60,000	57,805	2,195
Payments to Contract Employees	118,400	116,042	2,358
Employer Contributions	21,100	22,170	(1,070)
Allowances and Benefits	3,700	122	3,578
Total Manpower	279,000	285,731	(6,731)
Supplies and Services			
Travel Expenses	25,000	19,974	5,026
Advertising	2,000	429	1,571
Insurance	0	83	(83)
Freight and Postage	7,500	9,618	(2,118)
Rentals	8,375	4,917	3,458
Telephones and Communications	6,200	4,832	1,368
Repairs and Maintenance	300	—	300
Contract Services	258,325	274,308	(15,983)
Hosting	3,500	5,547	(2,047)
Other Purchased Services	15,500	19,276	(3,776)
Materials and Supplies	26,100	6,267	19,831
Total Supplies and Services	352,800	345,170	7,630
Total Expenditures 96/97	631,800	630,901	899

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